

Construction Materials

These tables give information about the soils as potential sources of roadfill, sand, gravel, or topsoil. Normal compaction, minor processing, and other standard construction practices are assumed. The soils are also rated according to limitations that affect their suitability for shallow excavations.

Rating class terms, as follows, are used to indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by soil features that affect their use as a source for roadfill, sand, gravel, or topsoil or their suitability for shallow excavations. Not limited indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. Slightly limited indicates that the soil has features that are favorable for the specified use. The limitations are minor and can be easily overcome. Good performance and low maintenance can be expected. Moderately limited indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. Limited indicates that the soil has one or more features that are significant limitations for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome, but overcoming them generally requires special design, soil reclamation, or installation procedures that may result in additional expense. Fair performance and moderate or high maintenance can be expected. Very limited indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.

Roadfill is soil material that is excavated in one place and used in road embankment in another place. In this table, the soils are rated as a source of roadfill for low embankments, generally less than 6 feet high and less exacting in design than higher embankments.

The ratings are for the whole soil, from the surface to a depth of about 5 feet. It is assumed that soil layers will be mixed when the soil material is excavated and spread.

The ratings are based on the amount of suitable material and on soil properties that affects the ease of excavation and the performance of the material after it is in place. The thickness of the suitable material is a major consideration. The ease of excavation is affected by large stones, a water table, and slope. How well the soil performs in place after it has been compacted and drained is determined by its strength (as inferred from the AASHTO classification of the soil) and linear extensibility (shrink-swell potential).

Sand and gravel are natural aggregates suitable for commercial use with a minimum of processing. They are used in many kinds of construction. Specifications for each use vary widely. In the first table, only the probability of finding material in suitable quantity is evaluated. The suitability of the material for specific purposes is not evaluated, nor are factors that affect excavation of the material.

Construction Materials (cont.)

The properties used to evaluate the soil as a source of sand or gravel are gradation of grain sizes (as indicated by the Unified classification of the soil), the thickness of suitable material, and the content of rock fragments. If the lowest layer of the soil contains sand or gravel, the soil is rated as a probable source regardless of thickness. The assumption is that the sand or gravel layer below the depth of observation exceeds the minimum thickness.

Topsoil is used to cover an area so that vegetation can be established and maintained. The upper 40 inches of a soil is evaluated for use as topsoil. Also evaluated is the reclamation potential of the borrow area. The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect plant growth; the ease of excavating, loading, and spreading the material; and reclamation of the borrow area. Toxic substances, soil reaction, and the properties that are inferred from soil texture, such as available water capacity and fertility, affect plant growth. The ease of excavating, loading, and spreading is affected by rock fragments, slope, depth to a water table, soil texture, and thickness of suitable material. Reclamation of the borrow area is affected by slope, depth to a water table, rock fragments, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, and toxic material.

The surface layer of most soils is generally preferred for topsoil because of its organic matter content. Organic matter greatly increases the absorption and retention of moisture and nutrients for plant growth.

Shallow excavations are trenches or holes dug to a maximum depth of 5 or 6 feet for graves, utility lines, open ditches, or other purposes. The ratings are based on the soil properties that influence the ease of digging and the resistance to sloughing. Depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, hardness of bedrock or a cemented pan, the amount of large stones, and dense layers influence the ease of digging, filling, and compacting. Depth to the seasonal high water table, flooding, and ponding may restrict the period when excavations can be made. Slope influences the ease of using machinery. Soil texture, depth to the water table, and linear extensibility (shrink-swell potential) influence the resistance to sloughing.